

## United States



Permanent immigration to the USA rose again during the US Fiscal Year 2006 (1 October 2005 through 30 September 2006), with 1 266 000 people receiving lawful permanent residency status. This represents a 13% increase over FY (Fiscal Year) 2005 and the highest level since 1991. The increase mostly comprised humanitarian migrants, whose numbers increased sharply over the previous year from 143 000 to 216 000, and those migrating for family reunification, which rose from 649 000 to 803 000 – mainly the unrestricted class of immediate family members. Admissions under the employment-based preferences category, on the other hand, fell sharply from 247 000 to 159 000. The decline in employment-based immigration was largely due to administrative delays rather than a drop in demand or a change in the caps. More than half of the employment-based visas went to family members of the principal applicant.

Temporary H-1B visas for employment are the usual pathway from a temporary visa category to permanent residence. The number of H-1B visa holders has been steadily rising and reached 432 000 in 2006. Demand is much higher than availability: when 65 000 H-1B visas were made available in 2007, 150 000 applications were received on the first day alone.

The US continues to be the major global destination for international students, as enrolment rose 10%, to more than 580 000, in 2006-07. India (15%), China (12%) and South Korea (11%) are the main source countries. 20% of students are PhD level, and many of these acquire H-1B visas upon completion of their doctorates.

Estimates by both government and research bodies place the undocumented population in the US at between 11 and 12 million in 2006, representing a net inflow of about 400-500 000 undocumented immigrants annually since the last regularisation in the late 1980s. More than 7 million are estimated to be active in the labour force (about 5% of the labour force).

Temporary migration schemes for lower-skilled workers played a smaller role. While there is no cap for the category, fewer than 50 000 seasonal

agricultural workers (H-2A) entered in 2006. Temporary workers for other sectors (H-2B) face a cap of 66 000, but returning workers were exempted and reached 134 000 in 2006. Demand far exceeded available visas. The law exempting returning workers from the cap expired at the end of 2007 and by early March 2008 had not been renewed.

Fee increases in mid-2007, as well as concern about changes in the migration system and interest in political participation, led to a sharp increase in applications for naturalisation in the first part of 2007, reaching 1 million. Fee increases for “green cards” also led to a spike in applications.

A comprehensive immigration reform bill was introduced in the US Senate in 2007. The bill addressed five critical areas: securing the border; holding employers accountable for the workers they hire; creating a temporary worker program; resolving the status of the millions of illegal immigrants already in the country; finding new ways to help newcomers assimilate into society. The reform package failed to gain sufficient support. A subsequent attempt to pass reform of the seasonal agricultural worker programme (“AgJOBS”) was also defeated.

The continuation of the Diversity Immigrant Visa programme (the Green Card lottery) has been placed in doubt as during FY 2007 both chambers of the US Congress passed bills that would eliminate funding for the program. The final outcome of this potential legislation now rests with a bicameral conference committee.

While attempts at reform at the national level were unsuccessful, state and local governments have increased their regulatory activity in the domain of immigration. In 2007, about 1 600 pieces of legislation related to immigration were presented at the state level, three times the previous year’s total. The main areas of legislative change related to the issuance of drivers’ licenses to undocumented foreigners, access to benefits, and employment. Some states have increased sanctions and enforcement for employment of undocumented workers, while others have attempted to extend benefits and access.

### For further information...

[www.dhs.gov/ximgtn/](http://www.dhs.gov/ximgtn/)

[www.foreignlaborcert.doleta.gov/](http://www.foreignlaborcert.doleta.gov/)

[www.dol.gov/compliance/laws/comp-ina.htm](http://www.dol.gov/compliance/laws/comp-ina.htm)

## Flow data on foreigners

Migration flows (foreigners) National definition	1995	2000	2005	2006	Average		Level ('000)			
					1995-2000	2001-2006	2006			
<i>Per 1 000 inhabitants</i>										
Inflows	2.7	3.0	3.8	4.2	2.8	3.5	1 266.3			
Outflows	..	..	..	..	..	..	..			
Migration inflows (foreigners) by type Permit based statistics (standardised)	Thousands		% distribution		Inflows of top 10 nationalities as a % of total inflows of foreigners					
	2005	2006	2005	2006						
Work	114.0	71.4	10.2	5.6						
Family (incl. accompanying family)	782.1	890.4	69.7	70.3						
Humanitarian	143.0	216.5	12.7	17.1						
Free movements	-	-	-	-						
Others	83.3	88.0	7.4	7.0						
Total	1 122.4	1 266.3								
Temporary migration	2000	2005	2006	Annual average				Inflows of top 10 nationalities as a % of total inflows of foreigners		
				2000-2006						
<i>Thousands</i>										
International students	284.1	237.9	273.9	251.2						
Trainees	1.5	1.8	2.4	1.6						
Working holiday makers	236.8	275.2	310.0	263.7						
Seasonal workers	30.2	31.9	37.1	32.0						
Intra-company transfers	55.0	65.5	72.6	61.4						
Other temporary workers	226.7	260.8	256.0	248.0						
Inflows of asylum seekers	1995	2000	2005	2006	Average		Level ('000)			
					1995-2000	2001-2006	2006			
<i>Per 1 000 inhabitants</i>										
	0.6	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.3	0.2	41.1			

## Macroeconomic, demographic and labour market indicators

Macroeconomic indicators	1995	2000	2005	2006	Average		Level
					1995-2000	2001-2006	2006
Real GDP (growth, %)	2.5	3.7	3.1	2.9	4.1	2.7	
GDP/capita (growth, %) – level in US Dollars	1.3	2.5	2.1	1.9	2.9	1.7	37 572
Employment (growth, %) – level in thousands	1.5	2.5	1.8	1.9	1.9	1.1	144 419
Unemployment (% of labour force)	5.6	4.0	5.1	4.6	4.8	5.3	
Components of population growth	1995	2000	2005	2006	Average		Level ('000)
					1995-2000	2001-2006	
<i>Per 1 000 inhabitants</i>							
Total	10.3	10.3	9.7	9.6	10.3	9.7	
Natural increase	6.0	5.7	5.8	5.6	5.8	5.7	
Net migration	4.4	4.6	4.0	4.0	4.5	4.1	
Total population	1995	2000	2005	2006	Average		Level ('000)
					1995-2000	2001-2006	2006
<i>(Annual growth %)</i>							
Native-born	..	0.7	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.6	260 344
Foreign-born	..	5.1	2.0	1.9	4.8	3.8	39 055
National	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Foreign	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Naturalisations	1995	2000	2005	2006	Average		Level
					1995-2000	2001-2006	2006
<i>As a percentage of foreign population</i>							
	..	..	..	..	..	..	702 589
Labour market outcomes	1995	2000	2005	2006	Average		Level ('000)
					1995-2000	2001-2006	
<i>Employment/population ratio</i>							
Native-born men	76.0	76.7	73.3	73.8	76.2	73.9	
Foreign-born men	76.9	81.6	81.7	82.9	79.3	81.0	
Native-born women	65.2	67.8	65.3	65.4	66.6	65.9	
Foreign-born women	53.3	57.3	56.4	58.2	56.2	57.1	
<i>Unemployment rate</i>							
Native-born men	6.2	4.5	6.3	5.8	5.6	6.4	
Foreign-born men	7.9	4.5	5.1	4.1	6.1	5.5	
Native-born women	5.3	4.2	5.2	4.8	4.7	5.1	
Foreign-born women	8.2	5.5	5.2	4.9	6.5	6.2	

Notes and sources are at the beginning of the Chapter.

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/434637854741>